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A COMMON-SENSE VIEW OF THE IMMIGRATION PROBLEM.

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IMMIGRATION has been debated in the United States ever since the adoption of the Constitution. For many years the foreigner, and what to do with him, shared doubtful honors with the slave in arousing popular excitement. He became, indeed, a political issue, and was principally responsible for the Know-Nothing Party which contested the election of Representatives in Congress, Governors, and State legislatures. In 1856, the candidate of this anti-immigration party for President, Millard Fillmore, polled nearly 900,000 votes.

It is not unlikely that the heat and violence which marked early discussion of this subject may have resulted, in some degree at least, from the presence of the immigration question in State politics; for the change in popular attitude has taken place since 1880, in which year Congress relieved the seaboard States of the jurisdiction which they had previously exercised over aliens arriving at their ports. At the present time, the opposite extreme appears to have been reached; the immigration question is at length free from politics and prejudice; and discussion of the subject, both in public and in private, is singularly calm and judicial. It cannot be assumed, however, that the assimilation of many thousands of aliens is any less vital and serious a matter than it was half a century ago, when races and beliefs were political issues over which heads were broken.

Those who dispute over this long-standing problem, either in Congress or elsewhere, are divided into two opposing, though non-political, parties, styled "Restrictionists" and "Anti-Restrictionists," terms which are self-explanatory. The argu-

ments advanced in public addresses by advocates* of each side may be thus summed up.

Point of View of the Restrictionist.—The immigrants now arriving are totally different from those whom our forefathers had in mind when they invited the world to contribute toward the building up of the Republic. Up to 1870 they were drawn largely from races similar to the inhabitants of this country, being principally English, Irish, Scotch and German. At the present time, less than one-fourth of the total number are immigrants of the old type; one-half are Slavs, and one-fourth come from the Mediterranean countries. The immigrants of to-day are poor human material, lacking in self-respect and intelligence; the great majority are distinctly unskilled—few being competent to perform even such simple work as domestic service; and, being brought over by the connivance of padrones and contractors, they belong to the category of “semi-contract labor.” Moreover, they are rapidly increasing in numbers. More than a million aliens arrived during the fiscal year 1907; and, of this number, at least 800,000 must be considered as constituting a net addition to the population. Such an increase is a menace to the institutions of the United States.

The newcomers are not pushing the earlier arrivals upward in the economic and social scale. Eighty millions of people cannot all be pushed into the position of shopkeepers and employers, or even of foremen. Instead, the lower stratum is being pushed out, and a condition of chronic poverty, distressing to contemplate, is arising in many of the great cities.

Upon reaching America, the immigrant goes where his inclination leads him. His tendency is toward the most populous cities, because there he is able to secure not only the wages which he desires but association with his own race. It matters little to him that there are large sections of land in the South waiting for the laborer. He is not interested to any great extent in lonely farm lands, made stranger by an unfamiliar language, and he is not interested at all in intermittent requirements such as arise in the harvest season in the wheat-fields of the West. He prefers to become a burden upon the municipality in which he is, rather than to seek or accept opportunities in agriculture.

* From the debate of Representative A. P. Gardner, of Massachusetts, Restrictionist, and Representative W. S. Bennet, of New York, Anti-Restrictionist.

Hence the foreigners remain in herds in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, causing a congestion of humanity.

The country is entitled to protection from the immigrant. We protect ourselves against the foreign product; for, in spite of the inequalities and inconsistencies of every protective tariff, the schedules tend to equalize differences in labor cost between given articles of American manufacture and corresponding articles of foreign manufacture. But we have no protection whatever against the foreigner himself. It is the height of inconsistency to protect American cotton-manufacturers and their workmen against the competition of Belgian workmen at the Belgian looms, yet to permit the Belgian workmen to cross the Atlantic and compete with the American workmen at the New England looms.

It is claimed that employment can be provided for these people; that, in fact, they are needed, because in these times there is a great demand for labor. But the obvious answer is that there is always a demand for labor which can be secured at a lower price. It can even be claimed that many of those who are most insistent in their demand for unrestricted immigration are interested in securing cheap and unskilled labor with which to compete with the more expensive labor now in this country. The same policy could be pursued until we had secured hundreds of thousands of Chinamen to take the places of our more expensive workmen. Such cheap laborers could make additions to the assets of the country: they could build new railroads, erect factories, and assist in vast improvements. But the individuals themselves would constitute liabilities: there would be a distinct change in citizenship, a definite lowering of the standards of living, a far-reaching injury to American workmen.

In prosperous times there are business opportunities for all who come to our shores. So long as two jobs are looking for one man, immigrant competition can do no more than retard the rise of wages. On the other hand, when two men are looking for one job, the conditions will be reversed. Prosperity must ever, for long or short intervals, give place to depression. As surely as day follows night hard times come; and when they arrive, what to do with the unassimilated millions of aliens will prove to be an increasingly serious question.

The View of the Anti-Restrictionist.—It is true that the class of immigrants has changed in the last few years, the large num-

bers who are now arriving being composed mostly of the Latin, Slav and Hebrew races. But while this fact increases the problem of assimilation, it does not render that problem impossible of solution; nor does it offer adequate reason for a reversal of the century-old national policy of encouraging immigration.

The immigrants of the present day are intensely in earnest, and they are industrious and frugal. A remarkably small percentage reach the charitable or penal institutions of the States in which they settle. The objection is raised by some that the proportion of illiteracy is now considerably greater than formerly; but an illiterate citizen is often a valuable citizen, if he is industrious and honest. Moreover, the present-day immigrant learns to read and write with surprising rapidity; statistics of naturalization show that, when aliens become citizens, but six per cent. are illiterate as compared with twenty-six per cent. upon arrival. At the census of 1900, the native whites of foreign parentage—that is, the children of immigrants—showed but 1.6 per cent. of illiteracy, while the children of native-born whites showed 5.7 per cent. The foreign-born father keeps his children at school longer than does the native-born parent. In many of the schools the hardest workers and the most frequent prize-winners are the children of foreign parents. On the East Side of New York, where there are hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews, and where, indeed, most of the immigrants of that class have lingered, there are large areas in which the night schools outnumber the saloons. These people buy real estate, become prosperous, and assimilate quickly. The Italians also, for the most part, are a thrifty, hard-working class, and they also are readily assimilated.

Although it is true that the large cities may become over-congested, especially during periods of depression likely to arise in the future, still there remain 242,000,000 acres of land in the South not under cultivation; furthermore, twenty per cent. of the spindles in the cotton-mills of that region have been long lying idle because of lack of labor. If operatives could be supplied to these mills, not only would they add to the prosperity of many communities by greatly increasing the value of the cotton cloth produced, but they would also eliminate much of the evil of child labor, children being employed in many localities, chiefly because no other labor can be obtained.

Upon the immigrants the continuance of the present prosperity of the nation depends, for they now form the industrial element. Moreover, immigrants who are law-abiding, industrious, temperate, and moral, and make good citizens, will continue to be a necessary element of the population. Indeed, the only objection that cannot be completely answered is the assertion that many of the successful immigrants ultimately return to their own country, taking with them their savings. But why should they not do so? Have they not contributed their share toward building up the national wealth?

The Opinion of the Average American.—There are five broad statistical facts which, at the present point in our national development, have a most important bearing upon the whole immigration problem, and in reality form the basis of the conclusions that the average American citizen inevitably draws from his own observation and experience.

1. A record of immigration into the United States has been kept since 1820; it is thus possible to ascertain the proportion which the total number of immigrants arriving during each decade from 1820 to 1910 formed of the total population of continental United States at the close of the same decade, as reported by the Census. This proportion, as indicated in the following table, has varied greatly during the period of record:

<i>Decade ending</i>	<i>Per cent.</i>	<i>Proportion.</i>
1830.....	1.1.....	1 to 100
1840.....	3.5.....	1 to 29
1850.....	7.4.....	1 to 13
1860.....	7.9.....	1 to 13
1870.....	6.2.....	1 to 16
1880.....	5.6.....	1 to 18
1890.....	8.3.....	1 to 12
1900.....	4.9.....	1 to 21

An estimate of the population in 1910 and of the total immigration during the decade ending with that year, indicates that in 1910 there will be approximately 12 residents to 1 immigrant who arrived during the decade. The proportion of immigrants to residents is therefore likely to be greater during the present decade than ever before, but not materially greater than the proportion shown for the two decades 1840 to 1850 and 1850 to 1860, in each of which it was 1 to 13, and the same as for the decade 1880 to 1890, in which it was 1 to 12.

2. The fact that immigrants formed a smaller proportion of

the population in 1900 than they did in 1890 is reflected in the further fact that between 1890 and 1900 the percentage of increase for the foreign-born population was only 11.8, as compared with 22.3 for the native population.

If, however, we set off the native white population of native parentage—that is, the white population native to the country for at least two generations—against those elements which do not belong to the native white stock, we find that the increase between 1890 and 1900 was 18.8 per cent. for the native stock and 23.1 per cent. for the foreign element. A comparison between these percentages and those given in the preceding paragraph affords an illustration of the cumulative effect of immigration.

3. At the present time, the white element native in this country for two generations or more forms but little more than half of the total population. In 1900, for every 100 whites of native stock there were 85 persons who were either whites of foreign extraction, negroes, Indians, or Mongolians; that is, for each white person of native stock there was practically one person of essentially dissimilar characteristics.

If those native white persons of foreign parentage who are at least ten years of age are considered as belonging to the native element of the population, then in 1900 the proportion of whites of native stock to persons of dissimilar characteristics was 100 to 46, or about two to one.

4. Although attempts to define the cumulative effect of immigration upon the population and the material prosperity of the United States are necessarily unsatisfactory, and possess no definite scientific or statistical value, one line of analysis may be accepted as at least suggestive. In setting forth the principles which govern increase or decrease in the number of human beings, Malthus, the first modern student of population, and still easily a leader in that branch of science, called attention to the fact that at the time at which he wrote—the close of the eighteenth century—the population of the United States was more favorably conditioned as regards increase than that of any other civilized nation, and that, in consequence, it was doubling approximately every twenty-five years. In the most favored sections, he declared, the increase was even more rapid. If the population reported at the First Census, 3,929,214, had been doubled only

once in thirty years, the results up to 1910 would have been as follows:

Based on theoretical increase.		Based on actual increase.		
30 years ending with	Amount of popu- lation when doubled.	Period required to double		Amount of popu- lation at end of period.
		No. of years.	Ending with	
1820	7,858,428	23	1813	7,959,452
1850	15,716,856	24	1837	15,808,421
1880	31,443,712	23	1860	31,443,321
1910	62,867,424	30	1890	62,947,714

Since those factors which retard growth, described by Malthus and accepted by students in general, become increasingly influential as population increases, a thirty-year period of doubling is more likely to be a just time allowance for the entire century considered, than a shorter period such as twenty-five years, as specified by Malthus. It is likely, indeed, to represent an over-estimate rather than an under-estimate.

According to the above table, the population which the United States should have reached theoretically in 1910, was actually attained in 1890, when the total number of inhabitants was 62,947,714. It will be observed that in the theoretical doubling process the increase during the last thirty-year period (1880 to 1910) is equivalent to approximately 1,000,000 persons a year. Upon that basis, in 1900 the theoretical population would have amounted to about 50,000,000; whereas the actual population in 1900 was 76,000,000. Thus the total population at the last census exceeded the theoretical figure for the same year by about fifty per cent. Hence, if we accept this comparison as possessing an approximate value, that part of the growth of the United States which has resulted from immigration is possibly about equal to the progress which has actually occurred from 1880 to 1900 in population, and thus presumably in wealth, amounting in the former to from twenty-five to thirty million souls, in the latter to more than \$40,000,000,000. While, as already suggested, an analysis such as the foregoing possesses no precise value, it is doubtless much more likely to be accepted by thoughtful men as a reasonable approximation, than to be seriously disputed.

5. A recent publication of the United States Census Office estimates the increase in the total population of continental United States for the period of six years from 1900 to 1906 at

7,946,935 persons, or 10.5 per cent. During the six years mentioned, the total number of immigrants admitted into the United States was 4,933,811; accordingly, if none of these immigrants died or departed, the total number of foreign-born must have increased from 10,341,276 in 1900 to 15,275,087 in 1906. But the actual foreign-born population in 1900 was only four-fifths of what it would have been if none of the immigrants entering the country during the decade had died or departed. Assuming that this proportion was maintained during the period from 1900 to 1906, the net gain to continental United States in new inhabitants drawn from other lands during that period, was 1,878,792, and the natural increase was therefore 6,068,143, or 8 per cent.

From this approximate computation of the actual increase of the population, it appears that the inhabitants of the United States are adding to their number, without the aid of migration, only about one and one-fourth per cent. annually. There are several European countries, notably Germany, in which the rate of increase is higher, and it is about as large in Great Britain, Norway, and Sweden.

Are not these general facts vaguely known to every man of average intelligence? If he were asked to state the proportion of immigrants arriving during a decade to existing population, although without expert knowledge, it is probable that he would hazard some such proportions as those shown in the table. And he would probably approximate rather closely the relative increase of the native and the foreign elements. He is aware that the division of the population between the native and the foreign elements is more or less on even terms, because he generally hires a foreigner to help upon the farm or in the shop, and, except in the Southern States, his wife secures a foreign-born domestic to perform the work of the household. If he is a resident of the city, he is daily made aware of the large proportion which the foreign-born now form of his community; if he is a resident of the country, he frequently receives impressive evidence of the increasing numbers of foreigners upon farms and in villages, by the departure of the native and the occupation of old homesteads by persons of other races and ideals. He is fully aware, moreover, of the fact that his own stock is not increasing rapidly; for his father's family doubtless consisted of half a dozen

children, while his own consists of not more than two children, probably one, and perhaps none at all.

Furthermore, the average man knows that there are already a few States and many communities in which foreigners greatly predominate. What has happened in such cases? In Rhode Island, for example, the population is composed largely of foreign-born persons and their children, while the native stock forms a minority; this is true also of many parts of Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas, in which from two-thirds to three-fourths of the inhabitants are of foreign extraction. These States are conspicuous for law-abiding qualities, for patriotism and for fidelity to the principles of the Republic. Rhode Island and Massachusetts are great manufacturing centres; Minnesota and Wisconsin are equally important from an agricultural standpoint. Few States of the Union have contributed to the national wealth more generously than these States are now contributing. Furthermore, in each the intelligent and progressive citizens of foreign birth or parentage have divested themselves to a large degree of the characteristics of their respective nationalities, and have taken on the essential qualities of American citizenship.

Thus in reaching his decision concerning the immigration question, is not the average citizen irresistibly impelled to one conclusion? If the foreigner now with us is almost equal, man for man, to the rest of the community; if the necessary increase in population can be secured only by generous contributions from foreign countries; if, because of our great total population, the enormous immigration of the present period is only a little larger in proportion than it has been at two other periods; and if the communities in which the foreigner is actually predominant are especially prosperous and successful—what is there to fear? The door has been open during the century and more of our history as a nation. We have abiding faith in the destiny of our country; why should we call a halt to these favorable conditions?

It must not be overlooked that society in the United States has been so constructed as to depend upon the continued arrival of large numbers of foreigners. In consequence, labor conditions prevailing in this nation differ radically from those which prevail in most of the countries of Europe, where all economic requirements are met by natives. In England, in France or in

Germany, for example, the man who sweeps the streets, the laborer upon public works or in mines, and the woman who cooks or performs other domestic duties, are as truly native as the ruler of the nation or the statesmen who guide its destinies. In the United States, the man who sweeps the streets, who labors upon public works, in mines or on railroads, and the woman engaged in domestic service, if white, are almost all of foreign birth. The native stock has learned to regard such callings as menial and hence as lowering to self-respect. Having accepted the education and opportunity which the Republic offers them, native Americans appear to consider that they are untrue to themselves if they do not avoid humble occupations and seek those regarded as an advance in the social scale. There is, therefore, a constant movement away from the lower callings toward the higher; and occupants for the places thus vacated are recruited from foreigners. They in their turn become imbued with the American idea, acquire confidence and develop ambition, and their children abandon to newer arrivals the callings which supported their parents. Evidence of this continued movement upward is seen in the unwillingness, not only of the native stock but of the children of the foreign element, to continue in the servant or so-called menial classes, and in the determination on the part of young women to become shop girls, telephone-operators, typewriters and shop and factory operatives, oftentimes at the penalty of severe privation, rather than to go out to service. Of all the persons who reported their occupation at the last census to be that of servants and waiters (numbering in all more than one million and a half), but one-fourth were native whites of native parents.

To instill the ambition to rise is one of the noblest missions of the United States, but it is necessary to recognize that it creates the problem of a constant shortage of workers in the humbler callings. These callings in themselves are as necessary in a republic as in an empire. Therefore workers in such occupations must in the future, as in the past, continue to be recruited from abroad, or else a large number of native Americans, and children of foreign parents, must be contented to labor uncomplainingly in the lower walks of life. It is possible that the former condition may continue indefinitely, but it unquestionably tends toward instability, for a nation which permanently

meets by importation its demand for workers is, in a sense, artificially constructed.

On the other hand, the increasing population of the Republic, now approaching 100,000,000, by its very magnitude may force a readjustment of conditions in the body politic, by which, willing or unwilling, an element of the population not suited by mental capacity to compete successfully with their abler fellow citizens will be contented to labor in the so-called humbler occupations. If this should occur, it must be accomplished by a more general recognition of the dignity of honest labor even in those fields. It is far easier, however, to continue the importation of labor for the callings regarded in American communities as menial. For a time, at least, this policy is certain to remain unchanged.

When the young United States started upon a career of independence, the inhabitants concentrated their efforts upon the development of national resources. They prayed for wealth, and Providence gave them the immigrant as the means of securing it. After the lapse of a century, our success surpasses the wildest dreams of our ancestors; the United States has grown marvellously in numbers, and has obtained a prosperity unprecedented in the history of the world.

But if the immigrant has advanced us two decades at least in population and wealth, shall we in our rejoicing at material success forget that a penalty lurks behind every blessing too freely accepted? We are saturated with commercialism; money is the standard by which most men and women in the United States judge of others. Many of our men, in urban communities at least, live brief, high-pressure lives, and frequently go down in a wreck of nerves or even of mind. Yet we continue to invoke the aid of the alien, because, instead of being content with our already marvellous prosperity, we seek greater riches with increasing eagerness. We are proving anew in our time the old truth that the pursuit of gold is not compatible with simple, deliberate, nature-loving lives. This is the result, possibly it should be called the penalty, of the immigration policy of the United States; but, until the world changes its standards, and money ceases to be the objective of humanity, the convictions, hopes and ambitions of men, and those of the people of the United States in particular, will remain as they are.

It is unlikely that our portals, thus far ever open to the aliens of all Europe, will be closed to them until it has been conclusively shown that the existence of the nation is imperilled by their coming, or until large numbers of worthy and industrious American citizens are obviously deprived of their means of livelihood by the arriving throngs of foreigners. At the present time there is nothing which points to the realization of these conditions; and, until there is, discussion concerning the restriction is in reality idle. Therefore let us be practical, nursing no delusions, and face conditions as they are. We have always needed the immigrant to aid us in amassing wealth, and we shall need him in the future, for the United States has now become the great labor mart of the world.

In the years to come, the increasing effect of immigration will doubtless appear in changed customs, realignment of religious beliefs, and some variation in national and political ideals—in fact, in the establishment of a new and composite civilization.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

WILLIAM S. ROSSITER.